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PERSONAL NARRATIVES

OF THE

BATTLES OF THE REBELLION

No. 6.

A TRIP TO RICHMOND

—AS—

PRISONER OF WAR.

BY

EDWARD P. TOBIE.

PERSONAL NARRATIVES

OF THE

BATTLES OF THE REBELLION,

BEING

PAPERS READ BEFORE THE

RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS

HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

No 6.

"Quaeque ipse miserrima vidi,
Et quorum pars magna fui."

PROVIDENCE:
SIDNEY S. RIDER.
1879.

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AS

PRISONER OF WAR.

BY

EDWARD P. TOBIE.

(Late Second Lieutenant First Maine Cavalry.)

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A TRIP TO RICHMOND AS PRISONER OF WAR.

[*Read before the Society November 15th, 1876.*]

MR. PRESIDENT, AND COMRADES:

I am not going to give you a tale of horrors this evening, as might perhaps be inferred from the title of this paper, but a simple, truthful account of the scenes and incidents of a trip to Richmond as prisoner of war—a trip which, however I may have felt about it at the time, and however strange such an assertion may seem, I now look back upon as of the pleasantest memories of four years service. It may be stated here that I was wounded and captured in a cavalry charge at Brandy Station, Virginia, on the ninth of June, 1863, [being then a corporal in Company G, First Maine Cavalry,] at a time when the prisoners of the two armies were being paroled

freely, and a flag-of-truce boat was carrying rebel paroled prisoners to City Point and bringing back Union paroled prisoners, almost every week, which accounts for the short term of my imprisonment. A month or so later, at Gettysburg, if memory serves me rightly, a hitch occurred in the exchange of prisoners, and for months after, the poor boys in southern prisons had little hope of escape except by death or the end of the war. Neither will I attempt to give you an account of the engagement in which I was captured, for none but a master hand can draw a faithful picture of a cavalry charge—to enjoy the excitement of which is well worth all its risks—but simply saying that it was one of the first real cavalry contests of the war, and a contest which taught the Southern cavaliers to at least respect their Northern foes, I will commence my story with the moment I found myself wounded and a prisoner, near a lively rebel battery on which we had charged. (I will say, in passing, that the battle-flag flying over that battery bore the legend "Hampton's Legion.")

Some of you can doubtless understand my feelings at the moment I found myself a prisoner, from

your own experiences. Never was the transition from the wildest excitement and the highest inflation of spirits to a feeling of thorough despondency and heartsickness more sudden and complete. A thousand different kinds of thoughts crowded through my mind at once. Visions of Libby Prison and Belle Isle, with all their attendant miseries, passed in mental review, together with the sufferings and weary waiting, the hoping against hope, of loved ones at home as day after day passed with no word from their missing soldier boy. But I need not dwell on this; too well and too deeply are like experiences rooted in many of your memories. Nor had I long to dwell upon it at that time. Present and imperative matters, and dusty, war-begrimmed men in grey demanded my attention. My revolver was given up as a matter of course, as also were belt, sabre and ammunition. A moment I was alone, and with hopes of escape I put spurs to my horse for a trial, only to find it hopeless and to lose by the operation the chance I before had of riding instead of walking; for a pleasant-looking reb pleasantly informed me that he could n't trust me on "that yere horse any

more." I was dismounted and ordered to the rear of one of the cannon, where I found several of my comrades had already been gathered, among whom was Sergeant George E. Jumper of my own company, with the sorriest countenance I have seen before or since. He had already paid a two months' visit to Libby and Belle Isle, and knew better than the rest of us what being a prisoner meant; for, though every one of us had learned much of the treatment of our boys in rebel prisons, the half never has been, never can be told. As I approached him I was ordered to give up my carbine, which was still slung to my shoulder, and which my captor had neglected to take in his hurry or I to notice in the excitement. With the most woe-begone expression imaginable, and the most disconsolate manner and tone, Jumper turned to me and said, "You might as well give it up, Tobe; it won't do you any good now." In spite of the surroundings I could not help laughing at him. A moment or two later a comrade and townsman, George L. Duston by name, arrived there with one hand bloody and in the air, and full a dozen kinds of expression on his face. He had been

wounded in the head and in the leg, and though terribly worried as to what he should do if the bullet had gone into his brain, was somewhat encouraged when I told him I was also wounded and he thus learned that he had a companion in misery. An order to leave the battery put an end to our mutual attempts at condolence. An officer put us into "two rows," and we were just about starting when a little, insignificant-looking reb rode up, and with pistol at my head demanded, "Here, Yank, give me them spurs, please!" Such politeness was overpowering, and he got the spurs.

After marching a mile or two in a dozen different directions, we reached Brandy Station, on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, which gave the fight its name. Here we found a large collection of blue jacket prisoners, and the number was increasing. Here was a large number of the enemy's wounded, a sight which rather did us good to see. Here were guards, equal in number, almost, to the prisoners, and here, also, were bummers without number. The rebel soldiers, that is, the real fighting men from the front, treated us, as a general thing, kindly and with

true soldierly courtesy; they were anxious to "trade us out of" any articles of clothing, knives, watches, or anything we desired to sell, and quite a traffic sprang up there in a moment. But the bummers, the coffee-coolers and dog-robbers, the thousand-and-one hangers-on around an army, plundered the prisoners at every opportunity, from which the better men and officers protected us as well as they were able. I remember seeing the officer in charge of us draw his sabre on one who was taking a hat from one of us. I also remember seeing Bill Wyman robbed of a watch, which the officer in vain endeavored to recover for him. Bill objected strongly, and loudly threatened, "If ever I do get back to my regiment, and if ever I do get hold of a prisoner that has a watch, he won't have it long; I'll make that square." While waiting here I discovered my old grey horse, ridden by a man in grey who had been tamed by a Yankee bullet, and having due regard for my immediate future welfare, I made bold to approach him with a request that I might take some things from my saddle-bags, which he granted I thought with surprising readiness, the explanation of

which I imagined I understood when I found the saddle-bags had been perfectly gone through. I won't impeach the character of my newly found friend by intimating that that was the reason of his ready accession to my request, for he allowed me to take my haversack, which was attached to the saddle and contained a liberal quantity of good old army coffee, half of which I transferred to his possession in my gratitude, and got most thoroughly thanked in his return gratitude.

We learned that we were to be taken to Culpepper Court House, some six miles away. Perhaps half an hour's rest we got when we again started, the more severely wounded being given horses to ride as far as it was possible to do so. We now marched for some time without incident; a comrade, who kindly staid by me, and myself gradually falling behind the main body of the captive squad, as my wound began to grow stiff and walking difficult and painful. Of course we kept a body guard with us, who proved to be a pair of kind-hearted soldiers, though rebels, and who did all in their power to render the march less irksome. I was in the act of

drinking from the canteen hanging at the saddle of one of our guardians, when a quick, sharp exclamation at him from his comrade, who was the other side of me and a short distance away, caused me to drop the canteen in a hurry, supposing my friendly guard was to be censured for this kindness. A moment later that delusion was dispelled, as number two rode back to number one, remarking, in an undertone, "Carry your carbine! here comes General Lee." In an instant our jovial comrades of this, to us, forced march, were transformed into stern guards; the carbines were brought to a "carry," their bodies were straightened in their saddles and all the soldierly look at their command put on, while poor we were forced to assume a position more resembling prisoners, though we walked as straight and looked as defiantly as possible. The whole affair passed quickly and was amusing as showing the similarity of soldiers the world over. Of course we were eager to behold the rebel chieftain, and we were soon gratified. He rode by us but a few feet distant, accompanied by two or three of his staff, and we obtained an excellent view of him. My recollection of

him is — rather tall, straight, hair and whiskers slightly tinged with grey, plainly and neatly dressed in the rebel uniform, without epaulets or any show or ornament, his insignia of rank visible only on close scrutiny, and every motion soldierly.

In due time we overtook the remainder of the prisoners, who were resting just outside of Culpepper. But a few moments rest did we get before we were again moving, now enlivened and amused by the taunts and jeers, the exultations and threats of the boys, women, and old men of Culpepper, who had come out to escort the Yankee prisoners to their town. Not an able-bodied man or a soldier could be seen among the insulting crowd. As we turned a corner at the edge of the town we saw an old man whom but a short time before we had captured while on a reconnoissance and on account of his age and the apparent improbability of his being of any service to the confederacy, "swore him and let him go." As he stood there, happiness shining all over his face and his mouth doing lively duty in expressing his gratification at the sight of so many captured Yankees, we may be pardoned if for a moment we

regretted the leniency shown him at the time of his capture.

About dusk we reached the Court House building, where the able-bodied prisoners were quartered for an hour or two and then started for Richmond, while the wounded were taken to a church, and quartered for the night, it not being deemed humane to give them a night ride in their condition. We found at the church still more of our comrades—of the more seriously wounded, who had previously arrived in ambulances—and two or three able-bodied prisoners left there to care for the wounded as they were able. We were ordered not to leave the church, and informed that if any of us were found strolling about the streets we should be put in the guard house and not sent to Richmond with the others in time to take the next flag of truce boat for the North, which they said would go in a few days. This last consideration was enough to secure the best behavior on our part, though we had not implicit faith in it.

We were soon left alone for the night, and my old friend George Duston and myself curled ourselves together on the floor of the gallery and did out best

to get a night's sleep; but the strange events of the day, the change in our circumstances within a few hours, and the absence of the comforts of even a soldier's bed, all conspired against sleep, and morning found us but little refreshed. We spent the morning in washing, dressing our own and each others' wounds as well as we knew, and in various ways making ourselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit. Fortunately most of us had pipes and tobacco, and it is doubtful if the most inveterate hater of the filthy weed would have denied its beneficial effects upon us then, or shook his head at us as we enjoyed the real comfort it then afforded us. We now began to realize a fact which the excitement of the day before had driven from our minds, that we had eaten nothing for thirty-six hours, and that we had nothing to eat. Our haversacks had been attached to the saddles instead of carried on the person, and were lost, while my own was in the hands of an unwounded comrade, who had kindly volunteered to carry it for me after its return to me by the wounded rebel, and of whom I had neglected to take it when we were separated. We dared not venture far from the

church, of course, but near by was a negro hut where it was possible we might obtain a mouthful for a consideration. An examination of our finances disclosed the fact that both of us had less than two dollars. We visited the hut and found there a venerable dinah who had developed a remarkable aptitude at taking care of herself, as shown by her exorbitant rates for hoe-cake. She asserted that she was not allowed to accept Uncle Sam's currency, but an opportunity occurring for her to do so unnoticed, she demonstrated good financial judgment by receiving and concealing a small quantity of it, for which she gave us much more hoe-cake than she allowed for the same amount of Confederate scrip. This served to somewhat relieve the sense of goneness at the stomach, and when, about ten o'clock, we were furnished with an ample supply of soda crackers, we began to feel more resigned.

About noon two or three rebel surgeons came to attend to the more seriously wounded, apologizing for neglecting us so long by saying they had so many of their own wounded to attend to that they had not been able to reach us sooner, and had but little time

now. We were inclined to forgive their previous non-attendance, as there was grim satisfaction in knowing that some of our bullets had made misery as well as theirs.

We were visited during the day by many citizens of Culpepper, male and female, and the oft-repeated assertion that southern women were more severe and unkind in their treatment of prisoners than the men, and either much more so than the soldiers, was confirmed. Indeed, the latter almost invariably treated us with kindness, and as the true soldier always treats prisoners. Stonewall Jackson's old brigade and other troops were encamped in the vicinity, as well as a large force of the cavalry we had fought the day before, and officers and soldiers from the various commands were strolling around the village at pleasure, large numbers visiting the church to talk over affairs with us. Many and various were the discussions held in and around that church that day on the relative merits of the opposing armies, the right and wrong of either side, and the prospects of either's ultimate success. These were all carried on in good nature, and though at times the discussions

grew warm, and the bantering over this victory or that defeat was somewhat caustic, there was no ill-feeling displayed. This took up our attention and served to make the time pass much more pleasantly than would have been expected among a party of wounded prisoners, and if I apply the term "enjoyment" to the day as a whole, all soldiers will, I think, agree that the term is not misplaced.

As a party of us, in blue and grey, stood on the church stoop, two rebel cavalry officers rode up hastily, and drawing rein, one of them inquired, "Who was in command of the Yankee cavalry, yesterday, Stoneman?" He was told that Stoneman was away. "Well," he replied, "whoever he was, he outgeneralled Stuart, all to hell!" "What's that you say?" quickly spoke up another rebel officer, in a deprecating tone, to which he replied, deliberately, as if to give it more force, "I say whoever was in command of the Yankee cavalry yesterday, he outgeneralled Stuart, all to hell; he didn't whip him, but if he had had half the men Stuart had he would have whipped him, all to hell," and he rode away. Here, also, was consolation for us.

Several rebel soldiers remarked to me, "If you and I could have the say in this war, we'd settle it soon, I reckon," to which I readily assented, always with a mental reservation, "If you would give up," and I doubt not each inquirer made the same mental reservation. A young rebel who had been quietly listening to the various discussions, took me a little one side and said in a serious manner, "I want to ask you a question; don't you believe that the side that is right in this war will win in the end—not the side which you think is right, or which I think is right, but the side which is right in the sight of God?" "Most assuredly I do," I replied. "So do I," said he, "and that's about all the consolation I can get out of it." We fraternized, and for an hour I had a good square conversation with him on war matters, which I have no doubt did us both good. It certainly confirmed me in the belief that the greater part of the rank and file of the Confederate army—not the political or military leaders—were honest in the faith that they were doing and fighting for the right.

All kinds of rebels are represented in the memo-

ries of that day's experience. There were the conscientious rebels, fighting for their country as honestly and as loyally as were we; there were the rampant, one-Southerner-is-as-good-as-five-Yankees rebels, with swagger and bluster; there were the tenacious rebels, who would take to the woods and the mountains if by any possibility the Southern army should be defeated, and there forever defy the United States government; there were the confident rebels, who could not conceive the possibility of a defeat of Confederate aspirations; there were rebels who were rebels just because they were on Southern soil when the opportunity to enlist offered, "an' 'twas fight, sure, they wanted, with divil a care for the side, ony how"; there were rebels from necessity, and rebels from choice; then there were the old men and boys, women, etc., — non-combatants — the meanest kind of rebels, who generally viewed us from afar off, which was as agreeable to us as to them.

Among others, was a young, jolly, rollicking Irishman, whose rations of whiskey had evidently not been short that morning, whose only pride was that

he belonged to Stonewall's old brigade—pride enough for him. Seating himself by George and myself, he entered into conversation. After listening awhile to the exploits of his brigade, George asked him why he was fighting for the Southern Confederacy, remarking that we had a large number of his countrymen fighting for us. "I know you have," said he; "the best fighting men of your army are the Irish. We've met your Irish brigade in battle a good many times. You always shove them to the front because you want to get them killed off. I've been at the North, and know how you all hate the Irish. I know something about your Know Nothings. I know how you have persecuted the Irish all through the North. Didn't you burn their churches at Bath and at Ellsworth, Maine, and at other places? Didn't you burn their convent at Charlestown, Massachusetts? And just because you hate them. Don't I know something about how you treat the Irish at the North? And don't you try to get them killed off by sending them to the front whenever you can? I know you have a good many Irish in your army, and I can't understand how they will fight for you, when you

have always treated them so." What could we say? While we of course did not agree with the alleged general Northern hatred of the Irish, we knew very well the facts of the destruction of the churches and convent stated, as two of them were in our own State, though we were surprised at having them thrown into our faces way down there under such circumstances, so we turned the conversation, well convinced 'twere no use to try to make him grieve for his allegiance.

Along towards night all but a few, who were too badly wounded for transportation, were taken to the depot and put aboard box cars in a train with the rebel wounded, to start for Richmond. And here I would do honor to one Southern woman, whose sable garments proclaimed what the war had cost her. She was at the train, passing cool water to the Southern wounded, with words of cheer and encouragement. We expected, of course, she would pass us coldly by, and would have deemed such action neither strange nor unusally unkind. But no! those of us who wished were served alike with her own friends, and some of us at least blessed the noble Southern

woman whose care for the soldier extended to friend and foe alike. We arranged ourselves in the car as comfortably as possible, and some time in the night arrived at Gordonsville, where we were taken into a hospital building by ourselves and given bunks with straw beds to sleep on, which we pronounced jolly, and soon most of us were sleeping as sweetly as though under the best of circumstances, and secured a good night's rest.

Next morning we were taken to the dining-room and given a breakfast of the light diet order. A small piece of bread and meat, both sweet and good, and a very small cup of coffee—made of rye we judged by the wry faces that followed the first sip—constituted the meal, and it was very welcome even if there was not very much of it. Every thing about the room and the tables was neat and clean, and I find in my diary of that day the following: "A better breakfast than we got at the Soldiers' Retreat, Washington, on our first arrival there, or than the first one I got at Fairfax Seminary Hospital, Alexandria, a year before."

We spent the day here very much as we did the

day before at Culpepper, though we were among a different class of men. The hospital was a large one, well-filled, and being mostly used as a convalescent hospital, there was the usual number of hospital bummers, convalescent shirks, etc. Still there were many true men and good soldiers here, who were only waiting an opportunity to rejoin their comrades in the field. A mere boy, not yet sixteen but a veteran of more than a year in the service, from the front the day before, sick, kindly inquired of a party with which I was if we had had enough to eat, and as kindly emptied his haversack of its hardtack for our benefit. It was all he could do, and we thoroughly appreciated the action. Trade was the prevailing mania, and Yankee example must have exerted a powerful influence here since the commencement of the war. Watches, knives, pipes, clothing, even—anything it was possible for a prisoner to have—the inmates of the hospital were anxious to "trade us out of," and prices rùled high. My old, half worn-out government hat brought me a five dollar Confederate note. Watches were in good demand, but pocket-knives were at the highest premium. Indeed, the

inquiry for knives was so universal and so frequent that our curiosity was much excited as to the cause thereof, and George finally inquired why they were all so anxious to trade for a knife. "We can't get them here," was the answer; "they are very scarce with us." "How does that happen?" said George, and then, solving the question himself, he continued, "I don't believe you have got ingenuity enough in the whole Southern Confederacy to build a jack-knife." A muttered half-assent was the only reply. One of our number who, on being bantered as a Dutchman, said, "If I bees a Dutchman, or if I bees a Italian, or vat I bees, it makes no difference—I bees a First Maine cavalryman," who from having seen service in Italy, was known throughout the regiment as "Garribaldi," or "Garry" for short, had previous to his capture been enamored of the gay uniform of Hawkins' Zouaves, and by some means had become possessed of one in full. It now served him well, and before the close of the day he had been dressed in a complete suit of grey with forty dollars Confederate money in his pocket as perquisites, and was again clothed in Union blue, with

fifteen dollars more added to his funds—all done by swapping with the trader-hating Southerners.

In the afternoon we were put on board the cars to make another attempt to reach Richmond, leaving, as at Culpepper, one or two who were unable to proceed. We were now placed in what had once been a passenger car, but for economy of space or some other reason the seats had been taken out and narrow boards inserted at small intervals, thus allowing nearly twice as many passengers to the car and several times the discomforts. A well soldier might perhaps have accommodated himself to the situation and extracted some comfort out of the ride, but there was a poor prospect for a party of wounded ones to do so. However, with sagacity and strategy we put ourselves in the most favorable positions—on the seats, between them, along the aisles, and even on the platforms, sitting, reclining, and at as full length as wounds and circumstances would permit. There was plenty of room, but two much furniture. A guard with a musket sat at each door of the car, but we had by this time learned that rebel guards were soldiers and would treat us like soldiers,

and we were soon on as good terms with them as though they were old comrades. George's curiosity was excited, as it had been many times, at seeing Irishmen in rebel uniform, and he went for one of the guards with: "What are you fighting on this side for? We've a good many of your countrymen fighting on our side." "Ah, an' sure," was the reply, "if I'd been North I'd be fighting for the North, but my home was South, and wouldn't I fight for my home, anyhow?" George appeared satisfied.

Our few hours as fellow-travellers and fellow-sufferers had put the whole party on a social footing, and for a party of wounded prisoners it was as jolly a car-load, I dare say, as ever passed over the road. With joke and song, with story and speech, with bantering the guards and chaffing with the people at the stations as we halted for a moment, and with aiding and sympathizing with each other, the time passed quite pleasantly till we got to Louisa Court House. Here was fun. The train halted some time, and the people were at the station in full strength. A month before most of us "went through" that place on Stoneman's famous raid, and the cavalry

trimmings wore a familiar look to them. "Was you 'uns all down on Stoneman's raid?" was poured at us freely, to which it was gratification to reply that we were. Then did epithets, vulgar and profane, fly at us thick and fast, and in this pastime the women were more adept than the men. They even spat at us, and doubtless would have made due progress in scratching our eyes out but for our guards, who were true blue though clad in grey. They, evidently ashamed of such action on the part of those for whom they were serving, voluntarily assured us of protection, say what we please. A lively cross fire was kept up by us, and justice compels me to state that the language from the car stood higher in the scale of decency than that from the station, while it provoked ten times the irritation. We enjoyed it much, and were rather sorry than otherwise to see the train moving away from a spot affording so pleasing and exciting a variety to the monotony of the ride.

About dark we reached Frederickshall, where the train remained till morning. The doors were locked to relieve the guards from duty, and we settled down

for the night. At first sleep was sought, but we were not so sadly in need of that luxury as to enjoy it in our cramped positions. Songs, patriotic and otherwise, were sung and repeated till the guards were disgusted—not, apparently, at the sentiments of the songs, but at the noise which kept them from sleep. Stories of field, camp, and of civil life, jokes, conundrums, etc., filled up the time until a late hour, one after another dropping off into an uneasy, restless sleep, to awake half a dozen times before morning.

Soon after daylight the chivalry of the vicinity began to flock around us, eager to turn an honest penny by the Yankee trick of trading. Dubious-looking pies, biscuit "three for a dollar," hoe cake, etc., were brought forth to tempt our hungry palates. Prices ruled decidedly "good for high." We had eaten nothing since the morning before, and now reaped the fruits of our trading at Gordonsville. Those who had money were generously inclined, and we all had at least a bite. This revived our spirits somewhat and started general good feeling among us. Again the jest and song went round, and again we presented the appearance of anything but what a

party of wounded prisoners would naturally be supposed to present.

But it was not all smiles and laughter. Tears and groans mingled to a fearful extent. It was a strange sight—those forty-three soldiers, all more or less wounded, many of them seriously, strewed around the car in attempts at comfortable positions, laughing, joking, singing, and endeavoring to keep jolly with a spirit that would honor Mark Tapley, and sad, indeed, to hear some poor fellow's laugh end with a groan and see the change of his features as a thoughtless change of position in the enjoyment of the laugh wrenched the stiffened wound and sent a twinge of pain through his whole body, and then again to a smile as the pain left and the remembrance of the joke or the thought of his own rapid change of emotions came over him. All in all, though, the proverbial good spirits of the soldier under all circumstances were fully sustained.

After waiting there till we began to fear we should not get to Richmond in time to be sent North by the next flag of truce boat, we started. Were prisoners, before or since, during the war, anxious to get to

Richmond? At different places along the route we had opportunities to purchase provisions of various kinds, which, in view of what might be our portion in Richmond, we availed ourselves of. Richmond papers, also, were procured, in which we found all the particulars of the Brandy Station fight, and learned the extent of the engagement and that they fairly acknowledged a defeat. This was rare satisfaction. We could well afford to suffer what we had suffered, and perhaps what we had in prospect, to wring from the Southern press the unwilling admission that the Yankee cavalry could fight, and to read in their papers that Yankee schoolmasters and shoemakers, awkwardly astride of horses and holding on to the pommels of the saddles, had out-generalled, out-ridden and out-fought their own graceful cavaliers, horsemen from birth, almost; and that their own Virginians had allowed the strangers from the North to become better acquainted with the country, its roads, creeks and rivers, than they were themselves, and to surprise and ride down a superior force of them at their own homesteads. Their chagrin was unbounded, and poor General J. E. B.

Stuart had to bear the brunt of their ill-feeling. One paper even suggested his removal from command of the cavalry for allowing an occurrence so mortifying to Southern pride. If ever we had the right to enjoy reading anything it was that, and we did enjoy it. It was just grand. And more as this was among the first real cavalry fights of the war on a large scale. From that date the Southern cavalry never regained or claimed the proud position it had so long been supposed to occupy, and our cavalry, a branch of the service which previous to that time had been simply an object of expense and distrust to the government, of contempt to the South, and even of shame to ourselves, under the organization commenced by and originating with our own Burnside and completed by Joe Hooker, had vindicated its right to a position second to no other branch of the service and to that of no other country; and that position it maintained to the end of the war.

Before noon we arrived at Richmond, the goal for which we had started when we left our homes, though under different auspices than we had hoped. There was no public reception awaiting our little band.

The depot had a lonesome look, and imparted that feeling to us. A few straggling exempts looked at us for a moment and turned lazily away, and one or two newsboys cried the news at us in sickly tones, but were not allowed to sell us papers. A portion of our party was put into ambulances, and as we followed them quietly and solemnly through the almost deserted streets, with a funeral aspect, the lonesome feeling grew deeper at every step. After a not long march we halted before a large building, and on looking up observed a sign extending over the street, bearing the words, "S. Libby & Son, Ship Chandlers and Grocers." This, then, was "Libby Prison," and we eyed the edifice with a sad, heart-sinking curiosity, even though we had been told the prospect was for only a short stay, for we knew not what might happen. The ambulances moved away, (for we were given our choice to go into the prison or into the hospital, and those not seriously wounded chose the prison, fearing if they went to the hospital they would not so soon be sent North,) and we were marched to the sidewalk near the door of the prison office. As we did so I saw looking through the

grated windows in the front of the building several of my own comrades, captured the same time as myself, and in my joy at seeing old friends, even under such circumstances, without thinking I stepped from the ranks to speak to them, when I was greeted with: "Tobie, you better be careful and do about as they want you to; they don't care what they do to a fellow here." This warning was from the mischievous monkey of my company, the most reckless dare-devil in civil life, whom no military discipline or service hardships had ever in the least checked the audacity or dampened the spirits of. That three days in Libby Prison should so tame him as to cause him to give such advice in such a tone, spoke louder than words. I stepped back into place quickly, with an indescribable feeling of terror, and from that time was as obedient as you please.

We were searched and everything contraband taken away from us. Money in small amounts we were allowed to keep, but large sums, five dollars and upward, of which there were but few, were taken, (for our own benefit, that it might not be stolen, we were told,) and a receipt given for it. We learned that

the flag of truce boat for our transportation North was expected to reach City Point the next day, and that it was the intention to send all in the prison to City Point in the morning to go by this boat, which was wonderfully good news. A roll and partial descriptive list was made out, and we were sworn "to fight no more against the Confederate States, and to perform no military duty whatever for the United States government, until exchanged according to the provisions of the cartel," and were required to sign the same parole.

Having thus been placed beyond the power of doing any more for Uncle Sam until exchanged, the officers were taken into separate apartments (to suffer a long and weary imprisonment, it proved—that was an occasion where enlisted men fared better than officers,) and we were escorted into the upper story of Libby's building and turned in with a half-clothed, half-starved crowd, captured at different times, most of them being Grant's men, wounded at Jackson, Mississippi, left there when the army went for Vicksburg, taken prisoners there and now partially or wholly recovered from their wounds. They had

been here but a few days, having been a month or more travelling over the Confederacy. Their clothes had been taken away, and their nakedness was covered with portions of worn-out and once thrown away rebel uniforms. We colonized in a corner of the back side of the room, near a window, and were soon surrounded by the former residents, eager to learn the news. We found Grant's men good boys—true men as they were brave soldiers, and as certain that Grant would take Vicksburg within a month as we are now certain that he did do it. They gave us a cordial welcome to their secluded retreat, and in various ways displayed a kindness of heart that could not be misunderstood. I was flattered by having one of them kindly offer me a couple of blankets to lie on if I wished, with the remark, "I wouldn't advise you to use them, they are cursed lousy."

Our first impressions of our new quarters were anything but favorable, and we most devoutly hoped we should leave them the next day. We had hardly got settled down when "Garry" proved himself master of the situation, whatever might be his nationality. He had carried a loaf of bread carelessly under

his arm which had escaped confiscation, and now proceeded to unpack his "leedle drunk," as he called it. What was our surprise to see him carefully remove a slice from one end and take from the loaf quite an amount of money, a bunch of matches—an article there had been a most rigid search for and which none of the rest, to my knowledge, had succeeded in smuggling—and various other articles of value to him and us just then. A smoke was the first thought, and thanks to his foresight, many of us had and enjoyed one. Our friends from the lower tenement paid us brief visits, one or two at a time as they could do so without detection, and we received much advice to do just as we were ordered, and were told that the day before a man had been fired at by the chivalrous home guard for striving too hard for a breath of fresh air from the window. The comrade to whom I had given my haversack on the day of the fight appeared, borrowed some matches, went back, and in due time came again with a rousing cup of coffee made from the contents of the haversack, over a fire built from portions of a barrel they had demolished on the lower floor, for doing which there

was a lively row then going on down stairs, and threats of longer confinement for the one that did it if discovered. We were advised to put the coffee out of the way as soon as possible, for fear of detection, and it just did us good.

The afternoon passed quietly in talking and sleeping and in trying to extract comfort. I amused myself somewhat by studying the dispositions of my fellow prisoners, which showed forth as plainly and in as great diversity as in camp. There were the growler and the happy-go-lucky; the looker on the worst and on the best side; the lazy and the active; the quiet and the restless; the argumentative and the take-it-for-granted; the cowed down and the free spirited; the hopeful and the despondent; the "sorry-he-enlisted," and the proud to be a prisoner, even, for country's sake. All these characteristics were plainly marked, (though all were a degree happier at the thought of so soon being released,) and it was easy to choose desirable comrades. I could not help noticing one young man from Iowa, who continually paced the floor, talking now with this and now with that comrade, his head erect and his spirit evidently

as undaunted as though he were on his native prairies. It was comforting to watch him and see how little his proud spirit could be curbed by prison walls.

We were interrupted, it seemed every five minutes, by some one with a little brief Confederate authority, with "Fall in Yanks, in four rows," when we were counted, a due share of growling and swearing done that the count was not twice alike, and warned not to "leave this yere floor; for you 'uns were paroled on this yere floor, and are counted on this yere floor, and will be sent away from this yere floor; and if you 'uns aint on this yere floor when the rest go, you 'uns can't go." This was the greatest bore of the establishment in my experience. Of the prison and its appointments I will not stop to speak, they have been so often described and are so well known to many of you.

Along towards night the rations of black bean soup were brought to us in kettles no decent New England farmer would feed his pigs from till they had been washed. Here I found the truth of the old adage, "Patient waiting no loss"; for not being quite

up to the scramble and rush of such occasions in that hotel, we new-comers did not get a dip till near the bottom of a kettle, and as a consequence secured rather more than an equitable proportion of beans, which we were well satisfied to do black as the beans were, and as we ate them we hugely enjoyed the growling of others about so few beans, and the repetitions of the old jokes of "diving for a bean," "Will somebody lend me a bean to dip in my broth once more," etc.

At the last time of counting us for the night we were again admonished to remain on "this yere floor," and were also informed that it had been thought that some of us might like a photograph of the prison to carry with us as a reminder of the happy hours passed there, and having a due regard for the wishes of the prisoners in all things, the authorities had procured some, which we could have at the rate of two dollars for the small size (two and five-eighths by two inches in size), and five dollars for the large size. We now thought we could understand why small sums of money had been left us when we entered the prison. The remains of my hat supplied

me with a copy which I still treasure, and the remains of "Garry's" uniform brought into the prison in his "leedle drunk," supplied himself and others. This looked to us a little like Yankeeism, but of course such a thought was gross injustice to the high-toned Southerners.

At dark, or thereabouts, we lay down for sleep. With the stone window stool for a pillow I was soon as sweetly sleeping as a child, and at two o'clock next morning was awakened from as pleasant dreams of home as soldier ever enjoyed, to "go North." At first I was half inclined to growl at being disturbed, even for so desirable a purpose, but I soon got over that, and in a few minutes we were in line and slowly marching down stairs. At the outside door of the prison were barrels of very stale bread in junks, one junk of which was given to each of us. We were drawn up in the inevitable "four rows" in the street in front of the prison, and an hour or more wasted in trying to count us, during which the counter displayed a large amount of bad temper, and we displayed unequalled patience though it began to grow thin along towards the last. An end to this finally

came and we started for the cars. How long that march through the rebel capital in the early morning was, I seem to have no recollection, but in the course of time we found ourselves closely packed into box and cattle cars, where the sick and wounded had already been put, and in motion.

At Petersburg we marched through the city without getting much of an idea of it, though I remember noticing that there were more signs of life than at Richmond. Peddlers of cakes, pies, bread, and like temptations were as plenty as in Washington, and in equal variety. After getting into prison, "Garry" discovered that the pair of pants he got in his last trade were badly infected with vermin. This was too much for him, and he at once got out of them, but with an eye for contingencies he took them with him, and seeing a cake shop on the route through this city he darted in and quickly came back with thirty ginger cakes in place of the pants. The peddlers followed us to the cars and hung around us for the hour or more we waited there, while blankets and different articles of clothing furnished many a poor fellow with a toothsome bit. Confederate soldiers,

also, were there in quite a number, and, as ever, ready for an argument, and as confident in the right of their cause and its ultimate success as could be wished. Grant and the prospect of his taking Vicksburg were the topics of discussion between them and Grant's men, and right loyally did the latter affirm that their hero would take it if he had not done so already, while their opponents as stoutly affirmed that he would not and could not. The probable result of the struggle, the right and wrong of either side, the capability of the North to flourish without the South, and *vice versa*, the resources of both sections, etc., were treated in a liberal manner, not free from brag on either side and perhaps without great disparity in argument, though the fact was patent that the Confederates (as well as our own soldiers) doing duty in cities and towns were not so well posted on the merits of the opposing armies as were their brethren at the front.

Off at last, and all were happy in the thought that this was the last ride under rebel guardianship. For a time the ride was enlivened with the usual singing, joking, etc., but as we drew near the end of the

route the party subsided into comparative quiet, each one apparently busy with his own thoughts. I often thought of this ride a year or more later, while riding over this same road, then doing noble and extensive duty in transporting munitions of war to the glorious old Army of the Potomac. All at once, and almost before we expected it, we rounded the turn at City Point, and came in full view of James River. All eyes were eagerly looking for the flag of truce boat, and in a moment more it came in sight. First we saw the flag of truce, and then, proudly floating a welcome to its returning defenders, the dear old, grand old, stars and stripes. Then arose one long, loud cheer such as is seldom heard, followed by a scene that beggars description. The sight of that good old flag so unexpectedly, sent a thrill through the heart of every one of us. Men whose lips the name of the Deity had not passed for years, save in a curse, now devoutly thanked God for the privilege of looking on "Old Glory" once more. Men who had faced death fearlessly, had seen comrades shot down by their sides with but a curse for the traitorous hand that directed the bullet,

had suffered hardships of every kind without a murmur, and out of whom the pains of gangrened wounds and of amputation had wrung hardly a groan, now cried like children as they gazed upon the old, familiar starry banner. Grant's men and those of the party who had been under rebel jurisdiction for some time, were perfectly frantic with joy, while to us who had not been from beneath its folds a week, it had new beauty and was the most welcome sight we ever saw, before or since. We had often read of the protection of the United States flag and thought we understood what it meant, but now we realized it as never before, and not a man in the party but breathed to Heaven a "long may it wave" from the inmost recesses of his heart, and registered anew the vow to defend it and maintain its honor, even with his life.

As the train stopped, and almost before, those who were able tumbled from the cars in joyful haste, most of them going for the water like ducks, and playing and splashing in it like so many school boys. Freedom of action and the luxury of the bath—the first good square wash for days and weeks—were

combined in a most agreeable degree. In the meantime the exchange officers of both governments were attending to red-tape requirements. These satisfactorily settled, the sick and wounded were first taken on board the boat, and we followed, passing one at a time between two officers, one in blue and one in grey, and being counted by both like so many sheep. "Ninety-three!" sang out the officer in grey as George stepped on the gang-plank; "ninety-three!" responded the officer in blue; "ninety-three, yer slob!" responded George, with a defiant look at grey-coat as he passed by. "Ninety-four!" as I followed, and so on. On the boat the invalids were tenderly nursed by the gentle hands of noble women, while each of us received liberal slices of soft bread and cold boiled ham, and a bountiful cup of coffee with milk in it, making for us the very best meal we ever tasted. George and myself went upon the saloon deck and took position where we could watch proceedings. The remainder came on board slowly, now and then a dispute about the count causing a halt in the column, and many were the tokens of joy as they stepped from captivity to freedom, some of

which were anything but complimentary in manner or words to the rebel officer who was keeping tally, and who for the time being represented the whole Southern Confederacy.

While standing there I witnessed an incident very common during the civil war. A rebel officer who stood on the shore discovered on the boat a soldier from his old home in Illinois. He made himself known, and many and rapid were his inquiries after his old friends, interspersed with now and then a "Do they know where I am?" I fancied with a half-ashamed look. He expressed his regret at not having known that his old townsman was a prisoner, saying he could and would have made him more comfortable, and closed the scene with: "Well, remember me to all the folks, please, and if you get taken again just inquire for me; I'll treat you well if you fall into my hands, but if I meet you on the field I'll kill you if I can."

At last all were counted and all on board, the necessary papers were passed, the boat slowly moved away, and we were on the way to the North and freedom, leaving behind us a lonesome-looking squad

of occupation-gone rebels, in a dismal-appearing corner of country, and the white-livered looking Confederate flag flying from a little house on the bluff. Of the sail down the river it is enough to say that a sail down the same river, from the same point, two years later, on the way home, with the war ended, had not half the whole-souled enjoyment in it.

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